

# RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 18.

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[NO. 9.]

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*Mr. Editor.*—Having witnessed many scenes of affliction in which the pretended comforters were more intolerable than the grief they attempted to mitigate, and believing the case very common, an endeavour is here made to dissuade people from employing such unfeeling beings in their seasons of sorrow, and to induce them to trust in God unwaveringly in all the days of darkness and calamity. If curiosity would be gratified with the name of the minister and the place of his residence, they can be made known.

## DEATH.

*"Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."*

When death hath separated the dearest friends, when it has infused the bitterest portion into the cup of affliction, when the wounded heart bleeds in its every fibre and seems ready to break with overwhelming calamity, how like a heavenly angel appears a messenger of consolation, who turns the tears of anguish into smiles of joy, and the shrieks of agony into songs of thanksgiving. But how can the grief-worn heart endure rebuking in this sorrowful season? How can the tortured soul sustain itself in this day of adversity, if the severity of upbraiding is super-added to the pungency of grief? Is he a comforter who comes at such a time to give new barbs to the arrows of misfortune and fill the soul with speechless anguish? Is he a herald of good, who in such seasons of heart-rending woe pours gall and wormwood into the bitter draught of sorrow? O my God! can such a being, civilized or savage, inhabit thy earth? Must we not look into the forests among the untutored beasts of prey? Indeed can such a monster exist?—Yes. Then it must belong to the ferocious tribes of the desert. No, it belongs to the human family. Then it must be a solitary instance, occasioned by some delusive system of philosophy or some visionary theory of religion. No, he neither believes in the ideal system, nor does he worship the Grand Lama or pay his devotions at the tomb of Mahomet. You astonish me, where will you find this imaginary savage? In the professed followers of God's dear Son, in the pretended ministers of Jesus. Can what you say be true? Is it possible any can name themselves after Christ, and yet be so unlike him? I would not have said this, had I not been possessed of full information on the subject, and prepared to answer all your inquiries. Death had deprived a lady of her aged and amiable father, of her endeared and affectionate husband; an only child, a daughter remained, in whom she centered all her hopes, on whom she rested, and for whom life itself was sweet. The daughter was deserving of the mother's love. Her form was graceful, her countenance engaging, her eye sparkled with intelligence and her heart was replete with every virtue. The mildew of death lighted on this lovely girl, and withered her away to the coldness of the grave and the banquet of the worm. During the final scene, while the chillness of death was freezing up every avenue of life, while the eye was closing for the last time on the light of day and the hand employed in giving the

parting squeeze, the minister of the place comes in to rend the heart with fiercer pangs and drive it to distraction. With cold unsympathising look he gazes on the weeping circle, rebukes them for their tears, and wrings the mother's soul with keener anguish. She, lorn and forsaken, left of every hope, sees no consoler left in earth or heaven, and therefore weeps as though each convulsive sob would burst her aching heart. The gathered friends attempt her consolation, but she, all thoughtless now of comfort, with eye unmoving gazes on her lifeless daughter's cheek, and seems to send her soul in every look. That eye, once bright with joy and flashing keen with intellect, is lovely yet in death. During this, the heartless man reproves her for her sorrows and mocks her for her tears. Assures her God's afflicting rod is chastening her for crimes of deepest crimson, and that the severity of the infliction will be increased, unless she yields to his directions.—The funeral comes, a day arrayed in sables and shrouds, and coffins up her child. The weepers seated, wait to hear the soothing accents of consoling prayer, and mid the grave-like silence of the place expect to hear the gospel whisper peace. With hard unmeaning face, and heart of flint, he brims the flowing cup of grief, and rends with double agony the aching soul. They move toward the field of graves and lay the body in its narrow dwelling, while the heart-broken mother remains unconscious of the passing scene, being completely engrossed in recollections of the past. But did not this minister give her any solace, did he not attempt to console? He endeavoured to perpetuate her sorrow and augment its violence, because she was a Universalist, and trusted in God that her daughter had gone to rest. How can such a person call himself a christian? Let us observe the conduct of Christ on similar occasions, and see what resemblance is discoverable. If he added sorrow to sorrow and gave the arrows of affliction a keener point, then may his disciples go and do likewise, but if he was invariably a son of consolation, then must his followers be such. View Christ at the grave of Lazarus, consoling the weeping sisters and mingling his tears with theirs. Do you hear any word of reprehension? Do you see any look of anger or unfeelingness? He approaches the cave; every heart is hushed with expectation and every eye looks up to witness some god-like deed. He lifts his voice to heaven in thankfulness to his Father that power was given him to confer so great a favour on man, then cries with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth, and the dead rises. Behold the astonishment! that cold inanimate form which had slept in death four days, becomes warm with life and blushes with the hue of health. How were his sisters rejoiced, how were they amazed in seeing their risen brother after he had left the damp and dreary vault of death. Let us consider the conduct of Christ at the funeral of the widow's son. While this poor disconsolate woman was following the breathless remains of her beloved son to their silent dwelling and lamenting his early departure, the Son of the Blessed arrives at the gate of the city and joins the procession. He accosts her in the language of affection, in the tranquilizing words of compassion, woman, weep not. He goes and touches the bier, and those who bare him stood still. And he said, young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. How must her heart have pulsated with inexpressible joy, while her tears of sorrow were

changed to tears of gratitude and she embraced her living son. More cases might be produced to exemplify the duty of commiserating the distressed in their seasons of affliction, but these examples of Christ are sufficient to establish the idea in the strongest manner. These reflections are made particularly for the benefit of the destitute mother, but are also designed to give solace to all who weep, by assuring them they are not forsaken of God. Let all duly examine the resemblance between Christ and his pretended followers, and then judge righteous judgment. If they earnestly endeavour to imitate their adorable master, and strive incessantly to make nearer approaches to the excellence of his character, they certainly deserve esteem and should receive the encouraging smile of all. But if they make high pretensions to sanctity, while they exhibit none to the world, they should be stripped of their assumed virtues, and exposed in their native deformity. It is hoped these remarks may ease many a burthened heart, whose troubles have been increased by those who should console by pouring oil and wine into the lacerated soul, and causing the weeping eye to smile. Let no one suppose himself abandoned of God in the day of grief, for although Christ was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, yet he was not forsaken of God. Be careful diligently to consider your case, and permit no miserable comforters and physicians of no value to obtrude on the sacredness of sorrow. Firmly relying on the eternal mercy of your heavenly Father, suffer not the rebukings of a false teacher to mar the serenity of your mind, or cloud its light. When you see any one attempting to agonize the feelings of the most delicate and sensitive in the hour of death or day of burial, you may know him to be a false teacher, for thus did not Christ. Endeavour in all things to imitate the Redeemer, walk in the way of wisdom, improve your every virtue and then rest in hope, for you have glorious prospects in the gospel.—Though your bodies may crumble into dust and ashes, yet the immortal spirit soars on high and enjoys the day-beam of heaven. Although earthly delights are full of mutation and liable to be taken from us, our heavenly inheritance is sure and exempt from vicissitude. Let us rejoicingly recollect that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Having such great and precious promises in the testament of our Lord and Saviour, let us not fear to die, but continually fear to do wrong in destroying our peace and the happiness of others by injudicious reprovings or premeditated attempts to injure. Let us lean on the Lord for endless life, and trust no perishable arm of dust for safety or salvation. Being assured that altho' we die, we shall live again, let us wait with patience till our change come, when this mortal shall put on immortality, and death be swallowed up of victory.

The soul, of origin divine,  
God's glorious image freed from clay,  
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,  
A star of day!

The Sun is but a spark of fire,  
A transient meteor in the sky;  
The Soul, immortal as its sire,  
Shall never die.

HERMES.

*From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.*

## MEDITATION.

To him whose heart ever glowed with the sensation of pity, whose breast was ever warmed by the philanthropic spirit of benevolence, and whose soul has been filled with gratitude for favors given, the subject of SALVATION is truly interesting, and peculiarly pleasing. A person of devotional mind, while he feels a sense of his obligations to

his Maker and Preserver, is stimulated by a principle of love to obey his commands; and this is increased as new scenes of divine goodness are opened to his view. The candid observer or diligent inquirer may at all times find means for enriching his mind with new and valuable ideas, which are calculated to raise his affections to God the source of all good and fountain of wisdom. The works of creation fully demonstrate these attributes of Deity, and afford ample scope for our contemplation and gratitude. The devoted Christian desires a just understanding of the ways of God, and rejoice to acknowledge Him as he is set forth in the scriptures of truth; and his knowledge so far from exalting him in his own esteem, and filling him with a spirit of vain independency, serves rather to heighten in him a sense of his unworthiness, his obligations to him who bestows all these favors upon him, and his entire dependence for every future blessing. Persuaded that his God is a God of mercy, a tender and affectionate parent to all the creatures which he has made, he can with joy look forward to that period of future existence, when earth's grand family shall be gathered together in one, even in CHRIST. Thus while his enraptured mind experiences a foretaste of that most glorious event, in the beatific visions of his soul, he can with the greatest propriety, in transports of joy, repeat that noble and unchangeable declaration in scripture, "GOD IS LOVE." He looks up to God as an immutable Being, and while he beholds him on the mercy seat, the friend of all mankind, he feels an unshaken confidence that a few revolving years will not change the scenes of love and mercy to hatred and vengeance. No,—God is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He changes not,—as the truth of the scriptures, so is this. Let us therefore imitate the good and the wise, and strive to be real followers of our heavenly Master. Do we believe that God is love and that he wills the ventual good of his creatures? Let us manifest it in all our doings, by a well ordered life and godly conversation, and a just observance of all his requirements, whom to worship is our reasonable service; remembering, he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love.

AMICUS.

*From the (Portland) Christian Intelligencer.*

## THE CHRISTIAN OPITULATOR.....No. VIII.

## WHAT IS THE TRUE SIGNIFICATION OF THE WORD HELL?

We now enter upon the examination of those passages in the New-Testament, in which the word hell is found: And as this is predicated upon the Old, we may reasonably expect to find much the same sense attached to this word in the latter, as in the former Scriptures. In fact, it would appear altogether unaccountable to us, if we were to find a meaning to this word in the New Testament, which we have shown is not even intimated in the Old. For, why should not the inhabitants of the earth before Christ be informed of such a place, as many suppose hell to designate, to which they must have been exposed, in common with all others? Why should the fact, that there is such a place, be kept a secret, until since the birth of the Saviour? If we were to look for any new, important revelation, should we not expect, from the known character and office of Christ, that it would be of a nature more glorious and benevolent? Would the "mediator of a new and better covenant" bring tidings of *woe* to mankind? It is true, however, that certain passages in the New Testament, not having so literal a signification as is generally preserved in the Old, have given to the superstitious and designing, some opportunity of dressing the subject as should best suit their wishes. This *seeming* countenance comes from the more frequent and figurative use of the word *gehenna*, the valley of Hinnom or the place of perpetual sacrifice to Moloch.

The first text is found in *Math. v. 22.* "Whosoever shall



say to his brother, *raca*, (the meaning of which is "vain fellow,") shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say "thou fool," shall be in danger of hell fire." The first thing which we request every one to attend to, after reading the texts quoted, is to examine critically and decide in his own mind, whether, any thing connected with the word "hell" is a plain description of it as a place in the eternal world, where the "finally impenitent" will suffer forever in flames of brimstone? Do you find any thing in this text which proves the hell therein named, to mean such a place? All that is said is, that they "shall be in danger of hell fire," but it does not determine, where that fire is, or how long it is to burn. Now, it is natural to inquire, if a person is in danger of being endlessly miserable, *merely for calling his brother a fool?* Where, on this supposition, is the established proportion between crimes and punishment? If to call a brother a vain fellow, exposed a man only to the scrutiny of the legal council, what proportion is there in dooming him to eternal tortures, after he shall have paid the debt of nature, for calling his brother a fool? Is it so much worse then to call a brother a fool, than to call him a vain fellow? We think we must look for a more reasonable conclusion than this. The original understanding was this: According to an established law of the land, he who offended by calling his brother a vain fellow, was in danger of being apprehended by the city council: But whosoever should call his brother a fool was in danger of being considered a criminal, and of being sentenced to pass through the fire of *gehenna* to Moloch, which punishment was generally executed upon criminals.

Matt. v. 29, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee cut it off," &c. See also chap. xviii. 9. It must, we think, be obvious to every observer, that the language here employed is highly *figurative*; for no one we presume would contend that casting away a *literal* eye or hand, would save a person from a *literal* eternal hell. In order to be consistent therefore, we shall contend that neither the members nor the hell are *literal*, but that both are *alike figurative*. As the eye discovers objects, and the hand forthwith seizes upon them; so our vain curiosity often pries inquisitively into affairs, often not our own, and our ambition grasps at objects, which instead of concerning our peace and happiness, generally beget to ourselves additional care and disquiet. It is profitable therefore, that we be content to act within our own sphere, even at the sacrifice of thwarting our desires, rather than to aim at new and useless acquisitions, which instead of bringing satisfaction, create anxiety and disgust. And it becomes us also, to look about us and see how many supernumerary acquisitions we have to engage our attention, from the simple discharge of our duty. Such as we discover, it is profitable for us to abandon, that we may be left to the enjoyment of more pure and substantial joys. Such an exegesis is, we are confident, far more consistent with this text, than to suppose it to be altogether *literal*, so that a hand or an eye can so offend as to require amputation or extraction, in order that after death, and after the resurrection too, (when bone must come to its bone,) a *part of the body* may be made the "redeemed of the Lord."

Mat. x. 28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." See also Luke x. 15, the same. We shall readily admit here, what the text so evidently asserts, that "God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." But our objection to the general understanding, will be that the word hell (*gehenna*) does not mean a place of fire in eternity, which everlastingly exists for the designed purpose of tormenting eternally the spirits of men. We say the very face of the passage gives contradiction to such an idea. It says "God is able to DESTROY both soul and body." Now admitting for the sake

of argument, that because God is *able* he therefore *will* destroy the soul; does it require a place of eternal fire after the soul and body are *destroyed*? Certainly not. In order to have it agree with the common notion, it should read thus:—"God is not only *able*, but he *will* (not *destroy* the soul but) *keep* it in eternal *existence* in everlasting burnings." This would have given no room for doubt. But remark the language: "God is *able* to *destroy* both soul and body," no matter where, whether in a never-ending fire, in the grave, or in the fire of *gehenna*, the valley of Hinnom. Notice the comparison made in the passage. Man is able to destroy, i. e. *take away the existence* of the body; God is able to *destroy* not only the body, but also to destroy, i. e. *take away the existence* of the soul. There is no intimation of a never-ending life of misery made here. We do maintain that *to destroy* never can mean to *perpetuate existence*, either in happiness or in misery. The obvious meaning is this: Fear not man so much, who, by committing your body to the flames of *gehenna*, can deprive it of existence; but rather fear him who is able, while man destroys your body, to take away the existence of your soul also. The text so far from proving hell to be a place of eternal torment, might, more plausibly seem to prove it to be a state of dark annihilation. But this it does not prove, any more than it does the former unscriptural doctrine. Whatever the text prove beside, it can never prove annihilation. It can never prove that, at the resurrection "all will not be made *alive* in Christ," that "all will *not* be changed and put on immortality." It can never prove that the grave shall have the victory, or that the sting of death (which is sin the *cause* of misery) shall *not* be taken away; and that the *effect*, flowing always from the *cause*, shall *continue to be*!

Because God is *able* to destroy, it is not proved that he *will*. Remark friendly reader, God's *power* is here intimated and not his *determination*. But perhaps some, not calculating on this suggestion, will object. But let us ask if there are not numerous passages in the scriptures, which speak of God's power to do, what he never did and never will perform? "God," says the Evangelist, "is *able* of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Does this prove that he did or will do this? Christ was said to be *able* to command twelve legions of angels to save him from the murderous fury of his enemies; but does this prove that he did do it? He gave his apostles power to say to this mountain, "be thou removed into the sea," and it should be obedient. Yet we have no evidence that they ever exercised the power. So God is *able* to *destroy* both soul and body. But as we before remarked, it does not prove he *will* do it. Now we know that God is able to destroy the souls and bodies of all men, but it is his *will* to have all men saved, and he is able to execute his will, and "will do all his pleasure."

ORIGEN.

From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.

#### BALFOUR'S INQUIRY.

A work with this title has just been issued from the press of Geo. Davidson, Charlestown. It is a large octavo volume of 448 pages, and is very handsomely printed upon good paper. The writer of this article, in the little leisure time which has been allotted him since the work came out, has perused it, with a high degree of pleasure and profit. The path in which the writer has travelled has not received the impress of frequent footsteps. It is in many respects new; and this gives it additional interest.

It appears by the account the author has heretofore given, that he was first led to doubt the truth of the doctrine of endless misery, by reading Prof. STUART'S Letters to Mr. (now Dr.) Channing. Mr. BALFOUR was much esteemed by his orthodox brethren; and it would be strange if there were not some things, which would have prevailed

over a man of flexible principles, to excite a prejudice in favor of the doctrine of endless misery. The following extract from his work will be appropriate in this place. "How far I am correct," says he, "my readers must judge for themselves. I hope they will, on the one hand, guard against receiving my error, if it be one, and on the other, beware of rejecting my view, if true, from prejudices of education. Under the influences of these prejudices, I began to examine this subject, and have been obliged to relinquish my former views of Gehenna; from the force of the evidence I have already stated, and which I have yet to adduce on this subject." We here see what we seldom see,—a man of learning, piety and respectability, surrounded by his orthodox friends, with whom he had formed the most endearing associations, and whose affection for him, we trust, has not decreased; we see this man brought to doubt the truth of a doctrine he has advocated for years. And we see him sit down with the determination of knowing, if possible, whether he has long advocated truth or falsehood. Every thing conspires to induce him to give every argument brought in defence of the doctrine of punishment in the future state its greatest weight; and allow no argument in favor of the opposite doctrine more influence upon his mind, than it justly deserved. We see his prejudices in array against him. He says, in a communication to a correspondent published before the Inquiry, "I had formerly believed that Universal Salvation was a very pernicious error: Until I, therefore, had seen sufficient evidence to convince me, that I was mistaken, it would ill become a candid Inquirer after truth, not to use all proper means to avoid (believing) it." "On the other hand," says he, "I was not using means merely to avoid this, if it was an error, but was also using means to ascertain if this might not be truth; and that I had formerly been mistaken."—We have seen this man's prejudices run so high, as to induce him to say, "I fear that if I am an honest man, I must be an Universalist." After all, we have seen him pursue his inquiry until he was convinced that the doctrine he had before advocated was false. But now comes what would have been the bitterest part for some people, he avows his convictions to his congregation and the world. He says in the Inquiry, after having written at length concerning Mat. x. 28, and given his reasons for not believing that by Gehenna was meant a place of misery in the future state, "with such weight of evidence pressing on my mind, how could I do otherwise than honestly avow the convictions which this evidence has produced, without violating my conscience, and forfeiting all claims to an honest-minded man?"

We here have an instance of what the force of evidence will do with a man of principle. Who will not say that Mr. Balfour began his Inquiry under circumstances disadvantageous to Universalism? Who will say that he believed without evidence? Who can say that he did not give every objection to it the fullest consideration, and every argument against it its greatest weight? No pecuniary views could have the least influence to make him an Universalist. We must regard his conversion as a triumph of principle.

The Inquiry which Mr. Balfour has published consists of two chapters, divided into a number of sections. In the first section of the first chapter all those passages of scripture are considered, in which the Hebrew word *Sheol* occurs, which is rendered, in the common version, *pit, grave* and *hell*. It is here distinctly shown, by a variety of clear and striking arguments, that *Sheol* had no reference to a place of punishment in a future state. We should be happy to quote many of these arguments in this place, but we hope the readers of the Magazine will all avail themselves of the privilege of reading the work. In this part of his Inquiry, he says, "another fact equally certain is, that not only are the words eternal, everlasting, or forever, omitted in speaking of *Sheol*, or *hell*, but this place is not spoken about as a place of misery, at all. Whether *Sheol* is trans-

lated *pit, grave, or hell*, in not one of the passages, is it described as a place of misery or punishment for the wicked, or for any one else. Before there need to be any dispute, whether the punishment in this place is to be of eternal duration, we have got first to prove, *that it is a place of punishment.*"

The next section of this chapter is devoted to the consideration of all the passages of scripture in which the Greek word *Hades* occurs. This word answers to the Hebrew *Sheol*. In translating *Sheol*, the LXX have almost invariably used *Hades*. *Hades* occurs just eleven times in the New Testament, and is rendered, in the common version, once *grave*, and ten times *hell*. Mr. Balfour contends that this word originally had no reference to a place of future torment.—The account of the rich man in Luke xvi. 23, he contends is a parabolic representation. He admits that our Lord might here allude to what he calls the heathen notion of punishment after death, but not to recognize this notion as truth, any more than he recognised the God mammon, when he said, "ye cannot serve God and mammon;" or Paul the doctrine of witchcraft, when he said, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you;" or any more than we, when we say, such an one has got St. Anthony's fire, another St. Vitus's dance, recognise the influence of these saints in producing these disorders. He contends that the Jews got their notion of future punishment from the heathen, in proof of which he adduces a luminous quotation from Dr. Campbell, in the third section of this chapter.—After considering all the passages in which *Hades* occurs, Mr. B. says, "these are all the passages in which the New-Testament writers use the word *Hades*, and which is once translated *grave*, and ten times *hell* in the common version. We think all must admit that it is never used to express a place of endless misery; and some evidence has been given that it is never used to express a place of punishment of any kind."

The 3d section is devoted to the consideration of 2 Peter ii. 4, in which, and which only the word *Tartarus* occurs. Dr. Campbell observes that the Jews, after their intercourse with the heathen, came to conceive of *Hades* as including different sorts of habitations for ghosts of different characters. They did not receive of the heathen the term *Elysium*, to signify those parts of *Hades* peopled by good spirits, but they used the word *Paradise* and the phrase, Abraham's bosom. But they did not decline the use of the word *Tartarus*.—By this they signified that part of *Hades* in which evil spirits were confined. If we can believe Dr. Campbell, it is indisputable that the Jews learned their doctrine of punishment in *Hades* from the heathens with whom they had intercourse. The word *Tartarus*, as we have hinted, occurs but once in the Bible, and then in one of those books whose genuineness, says Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. had been disputed by the early christian writers. Dr. Lardner says of these disputed books, "They should be allowed to be publicly read in Christian Assemblies, for the edification of the people, but not to be alledged as affording alone sufficient proof of any doctrine." Lardner's Hist. of the Apostles, Vol. i. Ch. ii. The authors of the improved version say, "Some have thought the 1st and 3d chapters (of the 2d epistle of Peter) genuine, but from the difference of style have doubted of the second." In a note on 2 Peter ii. 4, in which *Tartarus* occurs, they further say,—

1. The epistle itself is of doubtful authority.
2. From the change of style this is the most doubtful portion of the epistle.
3. By those who admit the genuineness of the epistle, this chapter is supposed to have been a quotation from some ancient apocraphal book, and the apostle might not mean to give authority to the doctrine, but to argue with his readers upon known and allowed principles. See Sherlock's Diss. and Benson and Doddridge's Introductions to this epistle.

If Peter was the author of the passage to which this note belongs, he may have used *Tartarus* emblematically, without any intention to recognise the notions of the heathen



as true. Our Lord undoubtedly, in the parable of the rich man, uses Hades in this way. As the heathen used Tartarus, it might be made a striking emblem of darkness. They looked upon it as a deep, dark place. Hesiod represents it as black Tartarus. We find it called, in Pope's translation of Homer, "the deep Tartarean gulph," and "murky Tartarus." The apostle speaks of delivering the angels that sinned "into chains of darkness," which the authors of the improved version interpret to mean, "judicial blindness of mind." The doctrine of future punishment, so important as it is represented to be, would not we think, if true, be rested upon such proof as this. At any rate, we do not feel satisfied to receive it upon such "precarious evidence." As orthodox writers acknowledge that Tartarus does not refer to a place of endless punishment, it was not necessary in the Inquiry, that much time should be spent in ascertaining whether it referred to that. After making an interesting quotation from M. Le Clerc's religion of the ancient Greeks, Mr. Balfour says, "2d. From the above quotation it appears, that though punishment after death in Tartarus was believed by the heathen generally, yet the better informed among them did not believe 'in the fables of hell,' but turned them into ridicule. Juvenal took no part in those opinions of the vulgar; and Virgil says—'it was the province of philosophy alone to shake off the yoke of custom, riveted by education.' Is it not then strange, that a doctrine, which was invented by heathens, and treated with contempt by their own wisest men, should be a fundamental article in the faith of christians? How is this to be accounted for? 3d. I may just add, that when the heathen were made converts to the Christian faith, all allow, that many of their previous notions were soon incorporated with it. This, together with the erroneous views held by the Jewish converts, laid a foundation for such a corruption of Christianity, which, if it were not attested by evidence indisputable, could not be believed. That punishment in Hades, or Tartarus, after death, is not a part of this corruption of Christianity derived from the heathen, at least deserves to be seriously considered. The evidence we have adduced, proving that it is, we submit to the reader's judgment. To conclude this chapter, We have shown, that neither Sheol, Hades, nor Tartarus, is ever used by the sacred writers to signify a place of endless misery for the wicked. This was all we were bound to do, in opposing the common opinion on this subject. But we have also shown, that this opinion originated with the heathen; and that the Jews learned it from them. To invalidate the evidence which has been produced, the very reverse must be proved."

The latter section concludes the first chapter of the Inquiry. The second chapter is divided into seven sections. In the first, are remarks upon Dr. Campbell's views of Gehenna; in the second and fourth, a number of striking and interesting facts are stated, "showing that Gehenna was not used by the New Testament writers to express a place of endless misery." In the third all those passages of scripture in which Gehenna occurs, are considered: In the fifth, "the argument arising from the Apocrypha and Targums, in favor of endless misery in Gehenna or Hell," is considered: The sixth is devoted to the answering of objections,—and the seventh to the author's concluding remarks.

The remarks upon Dr. Campbell's views of Gehenna are made in the spirit of charity. Yet the subject is deeply penetrated, and the Dr.'s inconsistencies are clearly pointed out. In the latter part of the section where these remarks are found, the true sense in which the Old Testament writers use *Gehannom* (Gehenna) or *tophet*, is shown. Remarking upon its emblematical use, Mr. B. says, "it is evident that they made tophet an emblem of punishment, and of future punishment, but, not of future eternal punishment in another state of existence. This all will admit without any hesitation. It is equally evident that they made it an emblem of future temporal punishment to the

*Jews as a nation.* Not a word is dropped, that this punishment was to be in a future state of existence, or of eternal duration. No; it is a punishment of a temporal nature, in this world. It is a prediction of miseries to be endured by the Jews, for their sins. It is not mentioned as a punishment for wicked men generally, or for Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately. No; the Jews, and they as a nation, were to suffer this punishment." By a comparison of our Saviour's celebrated prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, with quotations from Jeremiah, Mr. Balfour makes it appear perfectly evident, that Jeremiah used tophet as an emblem of the very miseries of which our Saviour prophesied; thus illustrating Christ's awful interrogation to the Jews, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers: how can ye escape the damnation of Gehenna?"

The facts contained in the second and fourth sections prove, we should think beyond controversy, that Gehenna was not used by the sacred writers to express a place of punishment in the future state.

The facts contained in these two sections are very strong evidence that Gehenna has no reference at all to punishment in another world. And when we review the section where all those passages in which Gehenna occurs are considered, the evidence of this appears irresistible. Concerning Mat. xxiii. 33, Mr. B. says, "It is now seen that the context of this passage leads us not to interpret the words 'damnation of hell,' of punishment in a future state, but of the temporal calamities coming on the Jewish nation, during that generation. If ever the context of any passage decided in what sense the writer used a word or phrase, it is entirely decided in the one before us."

In the fifth section, as we have said, the arguments arising from the Apocrypha and Targums, in favor of endless misery in Gehenna is considered. It is rather laughable that the apocrypha should be quoted to establish the use of Gehenna, when the word is not found in it. Gehenna is found in the Targums. But are we sure that the Targumists used Gehenna for a place of future misery? Is this certain? Let any one read Ruth ii. 12, and Isaiah xxxiii. 14, the places in the Targums to which Whithy and Parkhurst refer us, and see if he can make this out certainly. If they did use Gehenna to signify a place of eternal misery, the people had not learned this sense from them at the time of our Lord's ministry. For the Targums were not written until about the time of Christ. From Prideaux we learn, that the Jewish writers say that Onkelos who was the author of the most ancient Targum, assisted at the funeral of Gamaliel, who was Paul's master, so that the Targums could not have been written long before Christ. The Jews then could not have been liable to understand Christ by Gehenna, to mean a place of future punishment. The reader must consult the Inquiry for the best of ideas upon this subject. His time will not be unprofitably spent. The consideration of objections, and the conclusion of the work constitute the contents of the sixth and seventh which are the last sections in this chapter, and in the book. Some new objections are started, and some old ones answered with new and striking thoughts. We cheerfully recommend the whole work to the candid attention of the religious community. We recommend it to our friends and our opposers. The candid man who believes in a hell in the future state must find his faith shaken before he gets through. We do not expect to see any answer to this book; but if we do, we hope to see its important arguments considered; the body of its subject taken up; we hope to see the sense of the inspired writers sought for, in their use of the words, *Sheol*, *Hades*, *Tartarus* and *Gehenna*. We wish the writer a full reward for his labors, not only in a pecuniary, but a moral point of view: May he see his Book do much good in the religious world.

DIONYSIUS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

## BANCROFT'S SERMONS.

MR. EDITOR.—I am perusing the doctrinal sermons of the Rev. Dr. Bancroft, and am of the opinion, that, notwithstanding the spirit of moderation and liberality which characterises them, and which renders them honorary to the heart and character of their author, they are the offering of views which are entirely erroneous. The grand principle on which the author's scheme is founded, and which seems to be very generally prevalent at this time in the christian community, is, that God has provided means, in and through Christ, which are adequate to the salvation of all men, and then has left mankind to use, neglect, or misuse these means, and so to secure a blessed immortality, or to forfeit it, and subject themselves to the operation of the second death, which, the Dr. thinks, is annihilation. That God has left the issue of the gospel institution in this precarious state I certainly do not believe, and feel very secure that it is not so represented in the scriptures. For instance, take the case of the house of Israel. They are told, (Deut. 28.) that they should be cursed in all that they should set their hands unto for to do, until they should be destroyed, if they disobeyed God's commandments; and, on the other hand, that they should be blessed in all that they set their hands unto for to do, if they obeyed God's commandments. Then are told, (Deut. 30.) that, after all these things shall have come upon them, the blessing and the curse, God will circumcise their heart, and the heart of their seed, to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, that they may live.

Now has God, in this case, left the promise, that the heart of the people of Israel shall be circumcised, at uncertainties, and dependent on something to be done, on their part, which they may not perform? Does God say, I will circumcise their heart, provided they will make a proper use of the means which I will put in their possession for this purpose? No such thing. Again, to the same purpose we read, (Jer. 31.) It shall come to pass, after those days, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, &c. I will write my laws in their minds, and print them in their hearts, &c. Does God say he will do this, provided they make a right use of means? No such thing. There is no need of saying that. If God will certainly accomplish what he has thus promised, the people of Israel must be mere passive machines, as Dr. Bancroft supposes. This is certainly sophistical. The people of Israel, as it is written, will return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. Surely this implies action, on their part, and it is none the less action though induced by means which God effectually employs with them. But Dr. Bancroft says, if man is acted upon, the action which he performs is not his own. Is this true? If I apply the spur, or lash, to my horse, and he acts in consequence, is it not the horse that acts? Is not the action performed, the action of the horse? What fallacious reasoning! But if man is acted upon (says the Dr.) he is not a free agent? What then? Who says man is a free agent? Does God say it? It surely is no where said in the scriptures. And why contend for that, as a revealed truth, which is not revealed? But if man is not a free agent, it is said he is not accountable. Who says this? It is no where said in the bible. That man is accountable, is a truth plainly stated in the scriptures, and we know it by experience. We feel accountable, daily and hourly. It is said also, that we feel free in our action. And so we do, when we act in conformity with upright intentions. But no man ever felt free to do what he knew was wrong. But if (says the Dr.) mankind are not free agents, and acting in reference to an immortal reward, in a future state, then this is not a state of probation, and the scriptures plainly affirm that this is a state of probation. Most certainly this is a mistake, and a very gross mistake. Instead of plainly affirming the present to be a state of probation, there is no such thing as a state of probation mentioned in

the bible. Pity that a man of such liberal feelings as Dr. Bancroft discovers, should not be able to revolutionise the whole system of error, and take the bible, as it stands, for a system of divinity. I am sorry to see a volume, of twenty-nine sermons, written in excellent style, and breathing the spirit of liberality, so entirely unfounded in scripture, for thousands of people are captivated with such works, and are led to put their trust in them, not considering that they render the veracity of God contingent. Although God has promised (Is. 25.) to destroy the face of the covering which is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations, to swallow up death in victory, and take away the rebuke of his people from off all the earth, yet, unless all people make a proper use of means, (and they have power thus to do,) this promise of God will be made void. Therefore the promise of God, on this ground, is not at all to be depended on. When God promised Abraham, that in his seed (Christ) all nations should be blessed, Abraham believed it, knowing, as it is said, that what God promised he was able also to perform. But if the performance of God's promise depends at all on uncontrolled agency [free agency] in man, how did Abraham know that God was able to perform it? or how can any body else know it? Truly God is able to perform his promises, if the power is all kept in his own hands; but, if he has placed a part of this power in the hands of his creatures, and out of his own control, how is he able to do it? What is the reason that mankind are so averse from being considered under the guidance and government of their maker? especially when he has made it known as his determination to gather them all together, and to bless them, in Christ? Must it not be, that, not content with the simplicity of the gospel, they have sought out many inventions to evade it?

J. B.

Bernardston, Feb. 13, 1824.

## RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, March 6, 1824.

## "SAYBROOK PLATFORM."

We have sometimes had occasion to speak of the "Saybrook Platform," and in a few instances presented our readers with extracts from this precious mass of divinity. In so doing we incurred the displeasure of some who are not so orthodox as their creed makers; the words 'Saybrook Platform' seemed rather grating to their ears, and they denied that they either believed it, or that it was recognised by the Orthodox Church at the present time.

This system of faith having been recently acknowledged as sound, and a belief of it indispensably necessary to qualify a preacher for the duties required of him; we shall again exhibit to our readers some few of the excellencies of this system. This has been elicited more particularly at this time, in consequence of what occurred a few days since, on the examination of a young minister preparatory to his Ordination as Pastor over a Society in this city.—We will make a little digression that we may touch lightly upon this catechetical examination, which was probably a little amusing if not edifying to the spectators, especially, as many very novel as well as important questions were asked and answered, likewise many mysterious and incomprehensible points of faith were elucidated, and those things which have been thought most incongruous and irreconcilable, were made to harmonize most admirably well.—The most



important question, probably, was the one asked by the late Pastor.

*Quest.*—Do you believe (or can you give your assent to) what is vulgarly called the Saybrook Platform?

*Ans.*—Yes.

The catechist observed that the fraternity had deemed it necessary to require an assent to this system of *clerical ingenuity* and wisdom, before a minister was duly authorized to preach the gospel as professed by the brethren of the faith.—It seems therefore that this old, antiquated and mystical mass of inconsistencies, is still to be the test, or a prerequisite, and indispensably necessary to qualify one for the holy office of minister of the gospel, and enable him to have good fellowship with the defenders of the faith as once delivered to the saints.

This system probably was what another Rev. gentleman of this city had in view when he spoke of the fundamentals of Christianity, as it undoubtedly contains all the fundamental as well as particular tenets of the order. The young gentleman was asked whether he believed in a God, and to furnish evidence of his existence: Whether it was supposed that he entertained doubts on this subject, or whether it was for form sake, it is not known; yet could he have been recognized as the minister of any sect without this belief, and had he not for a long time been preaching and inculcating the idea that all creation was the production of a Supreme Being, perhaps it would not have so much astonished the spectators: whether he was distinctly asked if he believed in the immortality of the soul, we have not been informed: it is however, presumed not. Whether the belief of a God or a belief in the Platform is most essential as a matter of faith, may be somewhat doubtful. It however appeared that not less than one God should be acknowledged, yet he should exist in three separate and distinct persons; for then we have a God the Father, a God the Son, and a God the Holy Ghost, all possessing the same attributes and equally alike in degree; consequently all must possess the various attributes in an infinite degree, neither subordinate to the other. Why he was not instructed in presenting his petitions, to address the omnipotent, and indivisible God the Holy Ghost, we are left to conjecture.

Whether faith or repentance takes precedence, or how nearly allied repentance and conversion are, were probably important questions; especially very important when it was declared that those who are saved, are saved by the elective grace of God, chosen in the covenant of mercy as agreed upon by the three persons in the sacred Trinity, and thereby saved from the vengeance consequent on a violated law, by the mediatorial interposition of the second person in the trinity who offered himself as a victim to save the elect.

It was gratifying to find that God's irrevocable decrees with respect to the conduct and ultimate end of man, were perfectly reconcileable with the agency and volition which he possesses, and that the infinite benevolence of God and

the eternal misery of his children were likewise perfectly reconcileable.

A very weighty question in these troublesome times was asked by a modern apostle. The question (in substance) was, whether it would be a duty to dissolve the holy bands which bind brethren of one faith (Calvinistic) together, and withhold the fellowship which had been exercised towards each other, should any of the fundamental tenets be given up, such as the divinity of Christ, &c.

As a brother has recently had independence of mind sufficient to examine this subject and publish the result of his investigations, to the regret of our good orthodox divines, perhaps it was proper to know what course ought to be taken with respect to him, or whether the course already taken be thought justifiable.

We will now invite the attention of our readers to a few extracts from this system of faith, and let them judge of their merits.—At a future time we may perhaps make further extracts with remarks thereon.



#### Chapter III. Article III.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death."

#### Article IV.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so *certain* and *definite*, that it cannot be either *increased* or *diminished*."

#### Article V.

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the *secret counsel* and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his *mere* free grace and love, without any *foresight* of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace."

#### Chapter X.—Article II.

"This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all *foreseen* in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

#### Article III.

"*Elect infants* dying in infancy, are *regenerated* and *saved* by Christ, who worketh when and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other *elect* persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."

#### Chapter XI.—Article IV.

"God did from all eternity *agree* to justify all the *elect*, and Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless they are not justified personally until the holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them."

#### "FEAR NOT."

How wonderfully glorious, how charming to the feeling soul are the declarations of divine truth, which were uttered forth as symbols of the grace of God, and the salvation of the world. When we contemplate the immense noise,

the dreadful terrors which are employed with a design to bring people to the knowledge of the gospel, the indescribable torments with which they are threatened if they do not believe in some creed, which is but the offspring of human invention; when we see the mighty efforts which are made to operate on the passion of fear, to promote religious purposes, we cannot but recollect the words of the angel to the shepherds; "FEAR NOT." If the gospel were fraught with such dismal terrors as we generally hear uttered forth from our pulpits, why should this angel brake the solemn silence, which reigned among the shepherds, with language so consoling? Our preachers frequently inform us, that our everlasting salvation is suspended on the improvement which we make of the discourse which we have heard; and endeavour to awaken our fear that a few moments more will carry us beyond the reach of mercy. But that heavenly messenger, whom God sent to announce the birth of Jesus, held up no such terrors, but said; "FEAR NOT." Why was it not as necessary to preach terror then as now? This celestial messenger made himself of no consequence, did not intimate that if these shepherds did not believe him, their damnation was sealed forever; but said; "Fear not, for behold, I bring unto you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."—POLYCARP.

*Boston Magazine.*

### SORROW FOR THE DEAD.

The sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be charmed. Every other would we seek to heel; every other affliction to forget; but this would we consider it a duty to keep open. This affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude. Where is the mother who would willingly forget the infant that perished, like a blossom, from her arms, though every recollection is a pang? Where is the child that would willingly forget the most tender of parents, though to remember be but to lament? Whoever, in the hour of agony, would forget the friend over whom he mourns? Who, even when the tomb is closing upon the remains of her he most loved; when he feels his heart, as it were, crushed—in the closing of its portal; would accept of consolation that must be bought by forgetfulness? No, the love which survives the tomb is one of the noblest attributes of the soul. If it has its woes, it has likewise its delights; and when the overwhelming burst of grief is calmed into the gentle tear of recollection, when the sudden anguish and convulsive agony over the present ruins of all that we most loved, is softened away into pensive meditation on all that it was in the days of its loveliness. Who would root out such a sorrow from the heart, though it may sometimes throw a passing cloud over the bright hour of gaiety, or spread a deeper sadness over the hour of gloom; yet who would exchange it even for the song of pleasure or the burst of revelry? No, there is a voice from the tomb sweeter than song; there is a remembrance of the dead, to which we turn ever from the charms of the living.

Oh, the grave!—the grave!—it buries every error—covers every defect—extinguishes every resentment! From its peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down upon the grave of an enemy, and not feel a compunction that he should ever have warred with the poor handful of earth that is mouldering before him! But the grave of those we loved—what a place of meditation! there it is that we call up in long review the whole history of virtue and gentleness, and the thousand endearments lavished upon us, almost unheeded in the daily intercourse of intimacy; there it is that we dwell upon the tenderness: the solemn awful tenderness of the parting scene—the bed of death, with all its stifled griefs—its noiseless attendance—its mute, watchful assiduities. The last testimonies of expiring love! the feeble, flattering, thrilling—oh, how thrilling pressure of the hand. The last fond look of the glossing eye, turn-

ing upon us even from the threshold of existence! the faint faltering accents struggling in death to give one more assurance of affection.

Aye! go to the grave of buried love, and meditate! there settle the account with thy conscience for every past endearment unregarded of that departed being. She can never, never return, to be soothed by thy contrition! If thou art a child, and hast ever added a sorrow to the soul, or a furrow to the silvered brow of an affectionate parent—if thou art a husband, and hast ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in thy arms, to doubt one moment of thy kindness or thy truth—if thou art a friend, and hast ever wronged, in thought, word or deed, the spirit that generously confided in thee—if thou art a lover, and hast ever given one unmerited pang to the true heart which now is cold and still beneath thy feet—then be sure that every unkind look, every ungenerous word, every ungentle action, will come thronging back on thy memory, and knocking dolefully at thy soul—then be sure that thou wilt lie down sorrowing and repentant on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear—more deep, more bitter, because unheard and unavailing. Then weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of nature about the grave; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with these tender yet futile tributes of regret; but take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living.—*Sketch Book.*

### MARRIED,

In this Town, by the Rev. Dr. Flint, Mr. DANIEL H. PRESTON, of Canaan, (N. Y.) to Miss AMELIA BENTON, daughter of Capt. Josiah Benton.

### NOTICE.

The REV. NEHEMIAH DODGE, of New-London, will preach at the State-House TO-MORROW the 7th inst.

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